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## Marxism, Cultural Studies, and the “Principle Of Historical Specification”: On The Form of Historical Time in Conjunctural Analysis

**Douglas Spielman**

**ABSTRACT** Karl Korsch identifies in Marx’s work what he calls “the principle of historical specification,” the way in which “Marx comprehends all things social in terms of a definite historical epoch.” This work is concerned with this idea and its instantiation in contemporary social theory. With this paper I hope to show how the principle of historical specification has been interpreted within the Birmingham tradition of cultural studies, paying specific attention to (1) the form of historical time implicit in the concept of a “conjuncture,” and (2) the logic of historical periodization that follows from a “conjuncturalist” approach to historical research. I argue that a conception of plural temporality is central to the mode of historical analysis associated with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

In his 1937 essay, “Leading Principles of Marxism,” Karl Korsch identifies in Marx’s writing what he calls “the principle of historical specification,” describing it in this way: “Marx comprehends all things social in terms of a definite historical epoch. He criticizes all the categories of the bourgeois theorists of society in which this specific character has been effaced.”<sup>1</sup> In the current work, I am concerned with this idea and its instantiation in contemporary social theory. In what follows, I look at the tradition of cultural studies associated with the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at The University of Birmingham, a tendency that is notable for its emphasis on historical and contextual specificity. With this paper, then, I show how the principle of historical specification has been interpreted within this tradition of cultural studies and draw attention to the theoretical premises that ground this interpretation. Following the work of Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg, I argue that cultural studies not only takes historical specification as a kind of methodological precept, but, more fundamentally, takes historical specificity as itself the primary object of analysis. In presenting this argument, I pay specific attention to (1) the form of historical time implicit in the concept of a “conjuncture” and (2) the logic of historical periodization that follows from a “conjuncturalist” approach to social research.

Among other things, I suggest that cultural studies ought to affirm a notion of temporal multiplicity and reject any straightforwardly historicist account of time (that is, of time as linear, homogenous, and progressive). I argue for this by suggesting that there is a non-arbitrary relation between the abstract structure of a social formation and the form of historical time that is predicated of it. In doing this, I follow Althusser’s suggestion that a materialist philosophy of history is broadly committed to the proposition that how social existence is imagined and described conditions (in some strong sense) how history and historical time are imagined and described. In one respect, then, this paper is an attempt to bring the Althusserian critique of historicism into explicit relation with cultural studies’ practice of conjunctural analysis.

This paper is organized in two sections. The first addresses the place of Korsch's "principle of historical specification" in the Marxian tradition, suggesting several ways in which we may recognize readings of Marx that emphasize this principle. The second section focuses directly on theoretical work within cultural studies, especially on the work of Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg. It looks in particular at how the concept of a "conjuncture" provides a theoretical foundation for the radically contextual form of social research associated with this tradition.

## 1. Marxism and historical specificity: an overview

To foreground the principle of historical specification in one's reading of Marx is, at its most basic, to assert two things:

(1) Marx's analysis is not aimed at uncovering universal laws of social development, but is—to one degree or another—limited in its historical scope. Often this limit is taken to be coterminous with the historical limits of capitalism itself—the presumption being that Marx was fundamentally concerned only with capitalism and that his analysis, therefore, cannot (unless appropriately qualified) explain either pre or post-capitalist social formations.

(2) Not only is Marx's analysis restricted to a particular historical period, but so too are the categories he uses in developing this analysis. In other words, readings that foreground the principle of historical specification claim that the meanings of the basic theoretical categories with which Marx analyzes capitalism (labor, capital, value, the commodity, etc.) are historically specific. The suggestion, then, is that these categories do not express any transhistorical content, but instead represent the particularity of social and economic forms that are operative under capitalism alone. For example, Moishe Postone argues that the category "labor" (at least as it operates in Marx's mature analysis) does not primarily name a transhistorical practice, but instead describes a historically particular form of "social mediation."<sup>2</sup> In Postone's reading, labor is understood as a historically specific activity that constitutes and modulates a unique kind of social interdependence (viz. one in which labor—irrespective of its concrete attributes—functions as a means for making a claim on social wealth). The category, therefore, cannot be unproblematically applied outside of the initial context for which Marx developed it. (We may note in passing that Postone treats the category of "value" similarly: for him, "value" names the historically specific "form of wealth" that corresponds to this function of labor under capitalism.)

In his commentary on Marx's 1857 "Introduction" to the *Grundrisse*, Stuart Hall similarly affirms the historical specificity of Marx's categories. On the category of "production" in Marx's system, Hall writes:

There is no "production-in-general": only distinct forms of production, specific to time and conditions. [ . . . ] Since any mode of production depends upon "determinate conditions", there can be no guarantee that those conditions will always be fulfilled, or remain constant or "the same" through time. For example: except in the most common-sense way, there is no scientific form in which the concept, "production", referring to the capitalist mode, and entailing as one of its required conditions, "free labour", can be said to have an "immediate identity" (to be "essentially the same as") production in, say, slave, clan or communal society.<sup>3</sup>

Hall notes that while certain categories may appear transhistorical, they do so only at a very high level of abstraction. At such a level, however, they cease to be useful for developing a rigorous analysis of any particular historical moment. For example, by

ignoring the multiplicity of specific determinations that condition the process of production in a given period, the most abstract form of the category (i.e. “production in general”) is evacuated of all “scientific” content—it appears as a “common-sense” abstraction that, so conceived, cannot meaningfully contribute to a critical social theory.<sup>4</sup>

Here, however, a qualification must be made. The level of abstraction at which a category is conceived does not in all instances indicate its degree of historical specificity. As both Postone and Hall note, certain categories in Marx’s analysis appear more abstract precisely because of their historically specific attributes (or, stated even more directly, the category’s abstract character *is* its historically specific attribute).<sup>5</sup> Marx, for example, theorizes labor at a high level of abstraction, but, as Postone has shown, this is not because he set out to conceptualize labor as a transhistorical practice. Rather, the abstract way in which Marx discusses labor is due to the historically particular form that labor assumes under capitalism. The centrality of “abstract labor” in Marx’s theory of value—i.e. labor considered independently of its particular sensuous qualities—does not index a commitment to universalizing concepts, but an intellectual response to a historically specific set of social conditions. As Marx puts it in an 1858 letter to Engels, labor (at least as it is considered in his theory of value) is a “historical abstraction,” one that is “feasible only when grounded on a specific economic development of society.”<sup>6</sup>

Although the concept of an “historical abstraction” does little to specify whether a given abstraction is mental or practical—certainly mental abstractions are also historical, arising in thought under a particular set of historical conditions—Marx holds to the possibility of practical or “real” abstractions which are enacted in social life independently of (and even prior to) their representation in thought.<sup>7</sup> And it is this practical character that, in certain instances, makes it necessary to invert the typical relation between abstract categories and historical specification, opening towards paradoxical moments in which higher theoretical abstractions in fact grasp social relations in a more (rather than less) historically concrete form. Perhaps for this reason, Hall is careful to emphasize that “general production”—as Marx uses the term—is not equivalent to “production-in-general.”<sup>8</sup> Where the latter is an empty abstraction that purports to grasp the transhistorical essence of production as such, the former names a historically-determinate real abstraction, one which grasps the *particular* character of production under capitalist conditions, and thus helps to specify what is unique about the present.

Thus far I have suggested that arguments foregrounding the principle of historical specification tend to emphasize both the historical particularity of Marx’s object of research (viz. capitalism) and the historical particularity of the individual categories used to analyze that object. It is now possible to add a third element to this list and suggest that these readings of Marx tend to view the principle of historical specification as central to his critical methodology, and, by extension, to his critique of classical political economy. In these readings, much of what Marx rejects in classical economics is its tendency to reify social categories by viewing capitalist social relations as universal and transhistorical. In this interpretation, then, Marx’s critical procedure not only involved showing how the theoretical systems developed by the political economists came into contradiction with the conclusions drawn from those systems (a species of immanent critique), but included as well a critique of “bourgeois” historiography. In other words, it included a critique of the tendency among classical economists to transpose specifically capitalist economic forms backwards into history, thereby making capitalist social relations appear to be natural and inevitable. This is what Hall means when he suggests that classical economy’s “ideology is inscribed in its method.”<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps for this reason, readings that emphasize historical specification tend to draw more heavily from the *Grundrisse* than from *Capital*. While the former is explicit in its

historical criticism of classical political economy, the latter is structured more formally as an immanent critique in which Marx appears to provisionally accept categories as he inherits them from the classical economists in order to show that they reveal attributes of capitalism that would be considered undesirable even according to the economists' own normative criterion (for example, revealing a tendency towards monopoly conditions, hoarding, and economic crisis). As Postone notes, this characteristic of *Capital's* structure can obscure the centrality of historical specification in Marx's work.<sup>10</sup>

I have offered three criteria that might provisionally be said to unite Marxian theories of historical specificity. Although we can find in these certain points of commonality which link the various theorists addressed above, they do not allow us to posit any easy identity between them. Historical specificity is, to put it simply, a relative designation. There is not an absolute threshold after which one is or is not a thinker of historical specification. The theorists addressed here exhibit different degrees of historical specification, with some restricting their focus to more compressed periods of historical time and others (Postone most notably) operating at a more general, or epochal, level. In the remainder of this paper I focus on how cultural studies approaches its commitment to historical specificity and on the broader theoretical implications of this approach.

## 2. Cultural studies and conjunctural analysis

### *The object of cultural studies*

To understand the significance of historical specificity in cultural studies, it is necessary first to understand its object of research. This, however, is a deceptively complex task. As Lawrence Grossberg has noted, the unique patterns that have characterized the institutional adoption of cultural studies have also made it particularly challenging to define. Indeed, many of the works that have been grouped together under the heading of "cultural studies" share little in common with each other, and little in common with the intellectual project that initially emerged around the CCCS.<sup>11</sup> This diffusion has tended to obfuscate the specificity of cultural studies and of its empirical referent; the result is that cultural studies is often simply equated with the study of popular culture, or, in perhaps a slightly less general variation, the role of popular culture in mediating political identification and resistance. While these latter concerns certainly do feature prominently in work associated with the CCCS, it is not reducible to them. If popular culture has been given a place of prominence in cultural studies then this must be understood as a contingent articulation of the cultural studies project rather than as its essential attribute. As Hall argues in "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" cultural studies turned to popular culture because, in a particular time and place, it appeared as a key domain in which social struggles were framed and in which political consent was being constructed.<sup>12</sup> Popular culture, however, was not always understood to function in this manner, nor was it understood to constitute the primary referent for cultural studies. On this Grossberg is even more explicit: "too often, people have mistakenly assumed that cultural studies is about culture, while its real concern is always contexts and conjunctures."<sup>13</sup>

As Grossberg's comment makes clear, historical context is not merely "background" to something else—its elucidation is, in other words, not simply a means to grasp some other object. Rather, in this tradition of cultural studies, the aim of both research and writing is the conceptual reconstruction of a given context as such.<sup>14</sup> As Grossberg writes, "that traditional notion of object of study is only the opening, the point of articulation, through which one enters into the context that is the very object of analysis. This initial object of study must never displace the context as the real object of concern and investigation."<sup>15</sup>

This consideration still leaves open many questions. While the notion of “context” indexes a commitment to historical inquiry, it says nothing of the level of abstraction at which such an inquiry would typically operate within cultural studies. The term “context” is, simply stated, ambiguous with respect to the degree of historical generality it names—“context” may describe a lengthy expanse of historical time, as is the case in Postone’s work where the relevant category of historical contextualization is a mode of production, or it may describe the much more limited temporal horizon of a single event. Aware of these difficulties, Grossberg introduces an essential qualification: “If context is the real object of study of cultural studies, that context is generally understood as a conjuncture.”<sup>16</sup>

At this point we arrive at perhaps the central concept in this tradition.<sup>17</sup> The remainder of this section, therefore, will address how the concept of a “conjuncture” is understood within cultural studies and how it provides the basis for a theory of historical specification.

### ***On the origin of the concept***

Though I will describe the specific features of a conjuncture in more detail below, it is useful to briefly reflect on its history and political implications. While the concept of a “conjuncture” played a role in Lenin’s writings on the political situation in Russia, where it described the unusual combination of historical circumstances that gave rise to the revolutionary situation in that country, its most influential treatment is found in Antonio Gramsci’s work.<sup>18</sup> In the latter, it satisfies the need for a category of Marxian political analysis that can operate at a level of concretion adequate to the specific circumstances in a given national context. As Hall remarks, while many of Marx’s concepts operate at a relatively high level of historical abstraction (which is not to say they are transhistorical), “Gramsci understood that as soon as these concepts have to be applied to specific historical social formations, to particular societies at specific stages in the development of capitalism, the theorist is required to move from the level of ‘mode of production’ to a lower, more concrete level of application.”<sup>19</sup>

For example, in Gramsci’s work we may observe how the concept of a “conjuncture” is used to analyze the trajectory of historical development—both economic and political—within Italy in the 1920s and 30s. It is instructive to contrast this with a more “epochal” approach to history. The latter may, at least when carried out on a Marxian basis, describe historical development in terms of a simple contradiction between the forces and relations of production, understanding large expanses of historical time in light of a dialectic between these factors. However, to analyze particular national (and even regional) formations of capitalism, a greater level of historical detail is required, thus we see a multiplication of political and economic categories at the level of the conjuncture.

This categorial multiplication is apparent when we attend to Gramsci’s treatment of class power. Instead of speaking simply of a binary class structure—for example, of the bourgeoisie and proletariat—Gramsci describes “historical blocs” composed through the articulation of specific sectors of multiple classes. At the level of the conjuncture, then, political formations are analyzed in terms of temporary alliances between particular class factions, rather than as unified forms of class domination.<sup>20</sup> By way of example, we may follow Gramsci in his assertion that, given the relative underdevelopment of Italy’s rural south, the Italian working class could only ascend politically if allied with sections of the peasantry, winning their consent to its critique of capital and the bourgeois state.<sup>21</sup>

The cultural studies concept of “articulation” can function as an analytic tool for describing the formation of historical blocs and their capacity to exercise leadership within a conjuncture. Although this concept is often used more generally to describe the forging of contingent connections between different meanings, practices, and effects—

and is perhaps most often used to describe the way discursive entities become associated with particular connotative meanings—it applies equally to the sorts of political affiliations described above. Grossberg, for example, has analyzed the New Right as an uneasy alliance between different groups, some of which have partially contradictory agendas.<sup>22</sup> Hall similarly speaks of class formations being bound together through a process of articulation: “the unity of classes is necessarily complex and has to be—constructed, created, articulated—as a result of specific economic, political, and ideological practices. It can never be taken as automatic or ‘given.’”<sup>23</sup>

Here we would note that “hegemony,” at least in its Gramscian usage, is a political concept appropriate to an analysis at the level of the conjuncture. That is, it describes a situation in which a particular historical bloc is able to win robust consent to its political and intellectual leadership, both in the sphere of the state and across a diverse ensemble of civil society institutions. The “war of position” is Gramsci’s term for this ongoing form of hegemonic struggle. In his usage, the latter is counterpoised to the more punctual strategy of taking state power through a “war of maneuver.” In the context of marxist political theory, the Russian experience is in many respects the archetype of the latter. As Hall has noted, Gramsci’s political intervention is thus in part an attempt to displace the dominance of the Russian model by elaborating a strategic imaginary adequate to the conditions in industrialized liberal democracies.<sup>24</sup> The conjuncture names the terrain on which this war of position occurs, describing the spatiotemporal context of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles. In this respect, it is a central political category within cultural studies.

### ***The two-fold character of the conjuncture***

For analytic purposes, we may begin by suggesting that, within cultural studies, the concept of a conjuncture names two distinct things: it describes both a category of historical periodization *and* a structural arrangement of social elements. In other words, the concept can be understood to indicate a “unit” of historical differentiation—a means of differentiating one time from another, of registering some disjuncture (however partial) between past and present—and to describe the abstract form assumed by a social totality.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, I will suggest below that the second in many ways conditions the first: that the structural attributes of a conjuncture establish the basis for the form of historical time associated with it.

These multiple dimensions can be inferred from Grossberg’s tripartite description of conjunctural analysis as an intellectual practice that involves (1) determining “when and how we are/are not moving from one conjuncture to another”;<sup>26</sup> (2) evaluating the relations within a conjuncture “between the old and the new”; and (3) accounting for “the articulations within and across [ . . . ] the dimensions of locations, territories, and regions.”<sup>27</sup>

Conjunctural analysis thus requires one to simultaneously register the historical discontinuity *between* conjunctures, evaluate the historical unevenness *within* a given conjuncture (i.e. the nonsynchronicity of its different constituent parts, figured above in terms of a balance between the old and new), and to map the relations between the multiplicity of elements that compose the conjuncture (relations between different locations, actors, institutions, practices, etc.). In this schema, numbers one and two represent the temporal axis of conjunctural analysis (what we might call its historical dimension), while number three indexes its structural axis (that is, its concern with relations between a multiplicity of differentiated parts and between those parts and the social totality as such). Although it will be addressed more completely below, we should at this point emphasize that conjunctural analysis charts two forms of historical

differentiation: the first is the punctuation of historical time by different conjunctural formations, the second is the heterochrony amongst different elements *within* a conjuncture.

In what follows I will address all three aspects of conjunctural analysis outlined by Grossberg. I will, however, work from the third point to the first. This is in part based on the suspicion (one that has been alluded to but not yet substantiated) that each element of Grossberg's tripartite schema finds its logical basis in the subsequent element. That, in other words, the form of relationality associated with a conjuncture (number 3) logically implies a particular concept of historical time (number 2) and that this, in turn, establishes the basis for a certain form of periodization (number 1).

### ***The form of the conjuncture***

As they are theorized in cultural studies, conjunctures tend to be understood as relational, contradictory, and transitory. In the most basic sense, a conjuncture describes the confluence—in a particular time and place—of multiple social forces and their temporary stabilization as a “kind of totality,” i.e. as a relatively coherent milieu of social practice.<sup>28</sup> As Hall suggests, drawing our attention to the dissonances and contradictions that inhabit any conjuncture, “we should define a conjuncture as the coming together of often distinct though related contradictions, moving according to different tempos, but condensed in the same historical moment.”<sup>29</sup>

A “conjuncture” describes a complexly articulated social field in which no single element or region (e.g. “the economy”) immediately determines the whole or may be said to constitute its essence. On this point, reference to the Althusserian tradition can be instructive. Althusser's account of the social totality as a “complex whole” with the “unity of a structure articulated in dominance” provides an important theoretical precedent for work within cultural studies.<sup>30</sup> As in Althusser's system, the kind of social whole that constitutes the theoretical object of conjunctural analysis can be counterpoised to a Hegelian concept of totality in which every sphere of social life is reduced to the phenomenal “expression” of a single, essential determination.<sup>31</sup> One will note that this Hegelian formulation in fact depends upon two related assumptions: the first is that the social totality can be reduced to a single governing principle; the second is that this principle is externalized within, and thus expressed by, each individual part of the totality. When theorized along Hegelian lines, therefore, the essence of the whole is immediately legible from within each part, as each is merely the alienated (or externalized) expression of this essence. Thus, while the Hegelian account is able to consider the contextual determination of social elements (i.e. how parts are shaped by their articulation to the whole), it is only able to do so after a prior reduction, or simplification, of that context—that is, after a reduction of the context to a single essential attribute. Althusser will therefore argue, “the *Hegelian totality* is the alienated development of a simple unity, of a simple principle.”<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to this, conjunctural analysis posits the existence of a complex whole composed of an irreducible multiplicity of elements whose coherence is not guaranteed by a shared essence. To be clear, however, this multiplicity is not conceived in atomistic terms—that is, a conjuncture does not describe the mere external juxtaposition of otherwise self-sufficient elements. (Were it to do so, it would avoid the pitfalls of the Hegelian conception, but sacrifice any possibility of a strong account of relationality.) It is assumed instead that the various parts of a conjuncture are themselves shaped by the complete system of relations within which they are embedded; a system that (contra Hegel) must be conceived as nothing more than the series of differential articulations between heterogeneous elements.



Such an understanding does not, we should note, imply that all social forces are equally effective in shaping a conjuncture. On the contrary, effectivity is assumed to be unevenly distributed such that certain institutions and spheres of activity are able to exert a greater influence than others in structuring the articulations between elements in a given historical formation. Critically, these relations of dominance—that is, the differential effectivity of the elements in a conjuncture—are themselves complexly determined within the relational fabric of the conjuncture itself. Therefore, if a certain sphere of activity, for example, popular culture, assumes (at a given moment) an outsized influence in shaping social and political reality—that is, if an increasing number of social questions are being mediated by popular culture, and thus the relations between different practices, institutions, etc. articulated by and through forms of the popular—this is not explicable with reference to something essential in the nature of popular culture itself, but only with respect to the multiplicity of other elements in the social field that have overdetermined it in such a way that it takes on this outsized power. In this regard, conjunctural analysis tends to be broadly committed to a relational ontology in which relations have primacy with respect to their terms.<sup>33</sup> As Grossberg writes: “the identity, significance, and effects of any practice or event [ . . . ] are defined only by the complex set of relations that surround, interpenetrate, and shape it, and make it what it is.”<sup>34</sup>

### *Temporal multiplicity*

Thus far I have been following Grossberg’s suggestion that conjunctural analysis has a tripartite structure in which the analyst seeks to account for (1) the historical boundaries of the conjuncture, (2) the nonsynchronicity of the elements within the conjuncture, and (3) the specific relations between elements that compose the conjuncture. I have addressed the third, suggesting—largely by way of a contrast with Hegel—that conjunctural analysis tends to consider the social totality as a complex whole in which the relations between elements determine their specific nature and relative dominance. We can now briefly turn to the question of intra-conjunctural temporal differentiation in order to see how the description of the social totality offered above logically entails the nonsynchronicity of the elements within a conjuncture. That is, how this form of temporal differentiation follows from the account of the social totality as a complexly articulated whole.

For a second time we can draw upon Althusser’s work for theoretical guidance. It is Althusser who has perhaps most forcefully defended the idea of a necessary relation between the structure of a social formation and the form of historical time that is associated with it.<sup>35</sup> As he writes, “the structure of the social whole must be strictly interrogated in order to find in it the secret of the conception of history in which the ‘development’ of this social whole is thought.”<sup>36</sup>

It is on the basis of this intrinsic connection between social form and temporality that Althusser is able to extend his critique of the Hegelian notion of “expressive totality” into a critique of Hegel’s historicism. The latter, for Althusser, takes as its foundational presupposition the “contemporaneity of time.”<sup>37</sup> The historicist conception assumes, in other words, that all parts of the social totality, all of its discreet elements and tendencies, “co-exist in one and the same time” and develop in sync with each other according to a single, homogeneous vector of historical temporality.<sup>38</sup> Key, however, is that this mode of contemporaneity is possible only on the presumption that the social whole has the form of an expressive totality in which every sphere of social life “in itself contains in the immediate form of its expression the essence of the totality itself.”<sup>39</sup> As Althusser emphasizes, “the co-presence of the elements with one another and the presence of each element with the whole are based on a *de jure* preliminary presence: the total presence of the concept [i.e. the abstract essence of the social whole] in all the determinations of its



existence."<sup>40</sup> In sum, since each element of the totality expresses the state of that totality's essential determination, their historical development is immediately identical with its development (and thus they are also immediately contemporaneous with each other).

These considerations make it clear that a conjunctural account of historical specificity cannot set out from the presupposition that all elements of the conjuncture are, so to speak, of the same historical present or developing at the same pace—it must, in other words, reject any straightforwardly historicist picture of temporality. Given that a conjuncture describes a complex, rather than simple or “expressive,” totality it follows that no single element within it can impose a unified temporality (viz. its temporality) upon the conjuncture as such. Instead, different elements have their own histories and rhythms of change and cannot, therefore, be strictly contemporaneous with each other. For this reason, it is necessary for conjunctural analysis to (1) establish the differential relations between the multiple historical temporalities within a conjuncture and (2) to show how these temporalities are shaped—preserved, intensified, suppressed, etc.—by their specific conjunctural articulation to other elements with different temporalities and vectors of historical change.

### ***Relationality and time***

This second point above is essential: although different elements may have different temporalities, these temporalities do not go unchanged by their relation within a given conjuncture. To assume the latter would be to maintain historical differentiation at the cost of a robust account of relational determination. If, however, conjunctural analysis is to remain consistent with its focus on relationality—that is, with its insistence that elements are, in a strong sense, shaped by their relations—it must also see the differential forms of historical time that exist within the conjuncture as themselves determined by their historically specific combination in that conjuncture. In other words, if, as Grossberg suggests, a conjuncture is composed of elements with “different temporalities,” then the specific form of this differentiation must itself be explained conjuncturally. Although not elaborated with direct reference to temporality, Grossberg addresses this problem, suggesting that the relative autonomy of different elements within a conjuncture (i.e. their degree of independence, or “disembeddedness,” vis-a-vis other elements) is best understood as a function of their particular articulation within the relational fabric of their historical context. As he writes:

Although euro-modernity grants to each domain a certain (relative) autonomy, we cannot assume that the forms or degrees of that autonomy are the same across domains, social formations, or conjunctures. So despite its apparent disembeddedness, a domain continues to be embedded within and relationally constituted by the social formation. It is both embedded and disembedded. More, the form of its embeddedness defines it as disembedded.<sup>41</sup>

This approach can easily be extended to the question of time in order to take stock of the relative autonomy of different historical temporalities within a conjuncture. Althusser points us in exactly this direction when he offers his own conjunctural account of historical time:

The fact that each of these times and each of these histories is relatively autonomous does not make them so many domains which are independent of the whole: the specificity of each of these times and of each of these histories—in other words, their relative autonomy and independence—is based on a certain type of articulation in the whole, and therefore on a certain type of dependence with respect to the whole.<sup>42</sup>

Concretely, this means attending to the presence of uneven historical developments within a single context (recognizing the remnants of “older” social formations and “older” patterns of life which may be present along side more “modern” instances). Raymond Williams provides one language for doing this with his account of “dominant,” “emergent,” and “residual” cultural forms—this is a language that potentially allows us to describe asynchronous elements in the context of a structure in dominance.<sup>43</sup> It is not clear, however, that Williams abandons a historicist account in which a single normative conception of temporality functions as a yardstick against which other times are measured. The “emergent” and the “residual” appear at moments to function for Williams according to a logic of anachronism in which their difference is merely registered vis-à-vis their relative deviation from what is more properly of the present. As Harry Harootunian has argued, this logic of anachronism remains bound to an essentially historicist view of time. For Harootunian, the challenge instead is to grasp “temporal possibilities unchained from hegemonic unilinearism.”<sup>44</sup> This is a project that requires us to recognize “the possibility of nonsynchronous synchronicities, different times coexisting with one another in the same present, rather than a pyramidal hierarch of levels.”<sup>45</sup> It is my contention that a practice of cultural studies which takes the conjuncture as its central object faces this same imperative.

### ***The politics of temporal multiplicity***

Three things are at stake politically in this analysis of temporality:

(1) In the absence of a robust account of temporal multiplicity, certain logics of oppression may be obscured. As Marx writes with respect to the situation of uneven development in Germany: “Alongside the modern evils, we are oppressed by a whole series of inherited evils, arising from the passive survival of archaic and outmoded modes of production [ . . . ] . We suffer not only from the living, but also from the dead.”<sup>46</sup> The German workers are at once exploited by modern forms of capitalist enterprise and by the remnants of feudal systems of domination, rooted in relations of personal obligation and dependency. A contextual account of social life must, therefore, attend to non-synchronous historical forms if it is to register certain instances of systemic injustice.

(2) As Dipesh Chakrabarty has suggested, the historicist imaginary—one rooted in a picture of homogenous historical time and linear progress—provided an ideological justification for European colonialism. As he writes:

Historicism enabled European domination of the world in the nineteenth century. Crudely, one might say that it was one important form that the ideology of progress or “development” took from the nineteenth century on. Historicism is what made modernity or capitalism look not simply global but rather as something that became global *over time*, by originating in one place (Europe) and then spreading outside it.<sup>47</sup>

Massimiliano Tomba similarly affirms this point: “Unilinear historical progress allowed the measuring of the level of (Western) civilization attained by populations with histories different from those of Europe, thus justifying the domination of those who were represented as lower down the scale.”<sup>48</sup> On these accounts, a theoretically consistent anti-colonialism requires a critique of historicism.

(3) As Tomba has further noted, attention to the co-presence of multiple historical temporalities, allows one to register the unique forms of historical potential that are given by the articulation of multiple modes of production within a single social formation. Tomba makes this point via a reading of Marx’s letters on the *obshchina* (the Russian peasant commune). In responding to his Russian interlocutors, Marx faced the following

question: could the *obshchina* provide a nucleus for the organization of post-capitalist life, or was it necessary for capitalism to fully develop, thus eliminating these communal forms, before socialism could be constructed? In responding, Marx points to the possibilities vested in non-synchronous temporalities, arguing that, while the *obshchina* alone did not necessarily point beyond capitalism, in its articulation alongside the most modern forms of capital it created a unique form of historical possibility. As Tomba writes, “The coexistence and the clash between different temporalities show that historical possibilities do not collapse in the one-way temporality of capitalist civilization. Instead, we see that alternative routes are constantly being reopened. It is a matter of reading the convergence of historical times that are able to make the present explode.”<sup>49</sup> At issue, then, is not a romantic affirmation of pre-capitalist life, but the productive possibility opened by “the encounter between different temporalities, in their new combination.”<sup>50</sup>

I offer these three points to show some of what is at stake politically in a conjuncturalist account of plural temporality. In the following section I attend to the question of historical periodization and its political implications.

### ***The problem of periodization***

Thus far my analysis has been working backwards through the three elements of conjunctural analysis outlined by Grossberg.<sup>51</sup> I have suggested that the question of differential time has its logical basis in the abstract structure of the conjuncture itself. I have thus taken as my starting point Althusser’s claim that “it is only possible to give content to the concept of historical time by defining historical time as the specific form of existence of the social totality under consideration.”<sup>52</sup> What remains to be seen is how a method of historical periodization can be developed that remains consistent with these insights. That is, if conjunctural analysis must answer the question of “when and how we are/are not moving from one conjuncture to another,” then it must not only be able to account for what differentiates the elements within a conjuncture from each other (what determines their relative dominance and specific temporality) but also what differentiates one conjuncture from another. This, however, requires one to specify what gives a conjuncture its particular unity—to specify, in other words, what makes a conjuncture sufficiently coherent that one may speak of it beginning or ending, or being, in some basic sense, different from another conjuncture.

Since it has already been established that conjunctures lack the essential unity of an expressive totality—i.e. a unity that follows from the immediate presence of an essence in every one of the parts that are its outward expression—it follows that the *differentia specifica* which demarcates one conjuncture from another cannot simply be elaborated as a function of the (dialectical) development of any one element or relation. As John Clarke makes clear, such a reduction would be fundamentally inconsistent with the basic elements of conjunctural analysis:

Thinking conjuncturally implies examining the multiple—and potentially heterogeneous—forces, tendencies and trajectories that are compressed or condensed in a particular moment. These forces have different weights, different effectivities, different histories and even different rhythms—but it is their combination or coming together that constitutes a conjuncture. In such a perspective, the search for the primary cause represents a mistaken analytical route.<sup>53</sup>

Rather than think the unity of a conjuncture in relation to a single principle or causal factor, it is necessary, therefore, to consider a conjuncture as a “unity in difference.” This term (one that is Althusserian in origin, but used frequently by Hall and others in cultural studies) describes the articulation of a plurality of non-identical, and often conflicting,

social forces within a given historical moment. Any effort to establish the consistency of a conjuncture, and thus to make possible its contrast with other historical conjunctures, requires that its mode of unification be thought in terms of the condensation of multiple social tendencies and contradictions, and not their reduction to a single factor. Condensation, in this sense, may be likened to the form of “unity” described by Marx in the *Grundrisse* as the “concrete”: “The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse.”<sup>54</sup> This logic is implicit in Hall’s description of a conjuncture as “a period during which the different social, political, economic and ideological contradictions that are at work in society come together to give it a specific and distinctive shape.”<sup>55</sup> A conjuncture thus finds its coherence as a kind of metastable arrangement in which certain contradictions are, if not resolved, at least temporarily held in suspension. Its consistency, therefore, is that of a precarious balance between antagonistic forces.

In light of these considerations, it is apparent that to conduct an analysis at the level of the conjuncture requires one to look concretely at the particular historical actors who are involved—always in uneven and conflicting ways—in producing the specific settlement that defines the conjuncture. Within cultural studies (and especially Stuart Hall’s work) this moment of stabilization is often theorized in Gramscian terms as a process through which a structural or “organic” crisis is settled via some provisional form of consensus.

In this Gramscian account, a conjuncture emerges when certain social contradictions that have come together in a particular historical moment—and thus become an “organic crisis”—are subject to a settlement which (temporarily) defers their complete resolution. It is within the space created by this settlement—which Gramsci calls “the terrain of the conjuncture”—that political struggles are carried out and in which “the forces of opposition organize.”<sup>56</sup>

To employ conjunctural analysis as a method of historical periodization thus requires one to elaborate a dialectic between, on the one hand, the fusion of heterogeneous contradictions into an organic crisis and, on the other, the stabilization of this crisis as a conjuncture. As a mode of historical specification, therefore, conjuncturalism seeks to establish the temporal boundaries of a given conjuncture through an analysis of its emergence in response to a particular crisis and its breakdown when the settlement which it enacted is decomposed, falling apart in the face of some emergent form of social instability (i.e. the reemergence of an organic crisis). Reflecting on his own work analyzing the socio-political shifts in Britain during the 1970’s and 80’s, Hall gives us a sense for how such a dialectic may unfold in practice:

In *Policing the Crisis* we tried to look at the postwar period, which—despite many contradictory aspects—was a conjuncture dominated by what has been called the post-war, social-democratic consensus. This political ‘settlement’ came apart in the crisis upheavals of the 1970’s. Thatcherism, neo-liberalism, globalisation, the era dominated by market forces, brutally “resolved” the contradictions and opened a new conjuncture.<sup>57</sup>

Here Hall demonstrates a periodizing logic that grasps historical movement through an analysis of the composition and decomposition of conjunctural formations in response to the fusion (or condensation) of multiple crises and social contradictions. In this sense, as Hall has argued, a conjuncture is specified less by its duration than by the specific social dynamic it describes:

A conjuncture can be long or short: it’s not defined by time or by simple things like a change of regime—though these have their own effects. As I see it, history

moves from one conjuncture to another rather than being an evolutionary flow. And what drives it forward is usually a crisis, when the contradictions that are always at play in any historical moment are condensed, or, as Althusser said, “fuse in a ruptural unity.”<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to elucidate the “principle of historical specification” as it has been interpreted in Marxian scholarship and to suggest that the tradition of cultural studies is grounded in this principle. As I have outlined, this is seen most clearly in its efforts to establish a theoretical foundation for the concept of a conjuncture and to, on this basis, develop certain methodological precepts that might guide the concrete work of “conjunctural analysis.”

Cultural studies’ practice of “conjunctural analysis” is partially a response to the limitations implicit in the more abstract modes of social critique sometimes associated with Marxian critical theory. As I have suggested, a conjuncture describes a relatively finite period of historical time, one that is characterized by persistent efforts to establish a temporary settlement between competing social forces, and thus to provisionally resolve certain social contradictions. As a mode of historical periodization, therefore, conjunctural analysis tends to punctuate history according to a two-fold movement: in the first, a multiplicity of crises and social contradictions “fuse” or become an “organic crisis” casting the present conjuncture into decline; in the second, a “resolution” is instituted, settling the organic crisis and establishing the terrain of a new conjuncture. Thus, rather than describe the social formation in relation to more abstract categories, conjunctural analysis seeks to account for the plurality of forces that, in their concrete activities and alliances, create what Gramsci calls the “terrain of the conjunctural.” As a category, therefore, a “conjuncture” necessarily names a complex and internally differentiated field of social practice, one that encompasses the uneven relations between relatively autonomous actors, institutions, and levels of a social formation. Moreover, as I have suggested, largely following Althusser, thinking of a conjuncture in terms of the complex articulation of diverse elements requires that one also account for their differential temporality—for their different origins and rhythms of development, in short, for what we might call (borrowing a phrase from Harry Harootunian) their “synchronous nonsynchronicity.”<sup>59</sup>

As Grossberg has suggested, the choice to approach social reality at this level of abstraction—i.e. at the level of the conjuncture—is in part motivated by the belief that it is there that political questions can best be addressed.<sup>60</sup> It is, in other words, at this level of generality that one is able to produce a sufficiently robust account of the social complexity that structures the immediate field of political possibilities. As a result, the conjuncture is taken to be a privileged concept in the formulation and testing of strategic questions. While more abstract accounts of the social may provide essential guidance in this process, a fundamental claim in the tradition of cultural studies surveyed above is that they are, when taken alone, inadequate to such a task.

## Acknowledgments

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## Notes

1. Karl Korsch, "Leading Principles of Marxism: A Restatement," 1937, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/korsch/1937/restatement.htm>. ↗
2. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). ↗
3. Stuart Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method: A 'Reading' of the '1857 Introduction,'" *Cultural Studies* 17, no. 2 (March 1, 2003): 116–117. ↗
4. On limits of transhistorical abstraction, see also Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, especially thesis VI. ↗
5. Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*; Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method," 116. ↗
6. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. 40: Marx and Engels 1856–1859*, 1st edition (Moscow: International Publishers, 1983), 298. ↗
7. Marx suggests such a mode of abstraction in the following passage from the 'Introduction' to the Grundrisse:

{T}his abstraction of labour as such is not merely the mental product of a concrete totality of labours. Indifference towards specific labours corresponds to a form of society in which individuals can with ease transfer from one form of labour to another, and where the specific kind is a matter of chance for them, hence indifference. Not only the category, labour, but labour in reality has here become the means of creating wealth in general, and has ceased to be organically linked with particular individuals in any specific form. { . . . } for the first time, the point of departure of modern economics, namely the abstraction of the category "labour," "labour as such", labour pure and simple, becomes true in practice.

Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin Books Limited, 2005), 104–105. ↗

8. Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method," 113. ↗
9. Hall summarizes Marx's position as follows:

Classical Political Economy also speaks of "bourgeois" production and of private property as if these were the "essence" of the concepts, "production" and "property" and exhaust their historical content. In this way, Political Economy too presented the capitalist mode of production, not as a historical structure, but as the natural and inevitable state of things. At this level, even classical Political Economy retained an ideological presupposition at its "scientific" heart: it reduces, by abstraction, specific historical relations to their lowest common, trans-historical essence. Its ideology is inscribed in its method.

Hall, "Marx's Notes on Method," 116. ↗

10. Postone comments on this in a recent interview:

precisely because of the tightly structured, immanent nature of Marx's mode of presentation there {in *Capital*}, the *object* of Marx's critique (for example, value, as well as the labor that constitutes it, analyzed as

historically specific forms) has frequently been taken as the *standpoint* of that critique. The methodological sections of the *Grundrisse* not only clarify this mode of presentation, but other sections { . . . } make explicit that the categories of *Kapital* such as value are historically specific, that the so-called labor theory of value is not a labor theory of (transhistorical) wealth. Precisely because it is not structured as immanently, the *Grundrisse* provides a key for reading *Kapital*.

M. Postone and T. Brennan, "Labor and the Logic of Abstraction: An Interview," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 307. [↗](#)

11. Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 7. Stuart Hall has also noted this point: "In the United States, for instance, 'cultural studies' has become an umbrella for just about anything, and to ask whether someone is doing cultural studies or not is unlikely to evoke the answer you want." Stuart Hall, "The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities," *October* 53 (July 1, 1990): 22. [↗](#)
12. Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey, 2nd edition (Prentice Hall, 1998), 453. [↗](#)
13. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 169. [↗](#)
14. We might thus note that cultural studies tends to invert the traditional interpretive relationship between, for example, a given cultural text and its socio-historical context. Instead of establishing an account of the context as a means to inform the interpretation of the text, texts tend to be approached as instances from which to begin an analysis of the context. It is typical, therefore, for work in cultural studies to start with a specific textual object ("textual" conceived here in its broadest possible sense) and then move outwards from it in order to apprehend the real object of concern, viz. the specificity of its context. Hence, an account of the context fully emerges at the end of the analysis and not at its start. On this, see Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 55. [↗](#)
15. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 26. [↗](#)
16. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 40. [↗](#)
17. So closely linked is this concept with the project of cultural studies, that its intellectual practice is often glossed simply as "conjunctural analysis." See, e.g., Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 1991), 8; Stuart Hall and Doreen Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," *Soundings* 44 (Spring 2010): 57–71. [↗](#)
18. A brief treatment of this concept and its history can be found in Koivisto, Juha, and Mikko Lahtinen, "Conjuncture, Politico-Historical," *Historical Materialism* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 267–77. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920612X642204>. [↗](#)
19. Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley, 1st edition. (New York: Routledge, 1996), 414. [↗](#)
20. An early precedent for this approach to class can be found in Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. [↗](#)
21. Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question* (West Lafayette, IN: Bordighera Press, 1995). To take a second example, we could also describe "Fordism" as a hegemonic formation built on a provisional alliance between large-scale industrial capital and the industrial working class against finance and landed capital. [↗](#)
22. Lawrence Grossberg, *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right*, 1st edition, (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2018), 57. [↗](#)



23. Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg, reprint edition (Durham: London: Duke University Press Books, 2016), 162. [↗](#)

24. As Hall writes:

Gramsci addresses the critical issue, so long evaded by many marxist scholars, of the failure of political conditions in “the West” to match or correspond with those which made 1917 in Russia possible — a central issue, since, despite these radical differences (and the consequent failure of proletarian revolutions of the classical type in “the West”), Marxists have continued to be obsessed by the “Winter Palace” model of revolution and politics.

Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” 427. [↗](#)

25. I have argued that the concept of a “conjuncture” articulates two distinct, but related, theoretical problems: one pertaining to a questions of historical analysis and periodization, and another dealing with the nature of the social totality and the relations which compose it. Although different in substance and in its level of abstraction, we might consider a comparison to the way Etienne Balibar treats Marx’s concept of the mode of production in *Reading Capital*. Here Balibar suggests a mode of production primarily describes a specific combinatory dynamic—that is, a structure of relations between different elements of the economy—and then, secondarily, a unit of historical periodization. That is, only by way of a comparative analysis of the differential forms assumed by specific modes of production might we see it as a category of historical analysis. For Balibar, therefore, the mode of production has both a synchronic and a diachronic axis. Synchronic when it functions to described a specific field of articulated elements; diachronic when it describes the historically differentiated character of this field vis-à-vis preceding forms of articulation. Not unlike a mode of production in Balibar’s account, a conjuncture describes both a particular way of conceptualizing social relations, and a particular way of marking historical difference. See Etienne Balibar, “The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism,” in Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 228. [↗](#)

26. Hall quoted in Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 42. [↗](#)

27. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 42. [↗](#)

28. As Grossberg writes,

A conjuncture is constituted by, at, and as the articulation of multiple, overlapping, competing, reinforcing, etc., lines of force and transformation, destabilization and (re-) stabilization, with differing temporalities and spatialities, producing a potentially but never actually chaotic assemblage or articulations of contradictions and contestations. Thus, it is always a kind of totality, always temporary, complex, and fragile, that one takes hold of through analytic and political work.

Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 41. [↗](#)

29. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London; New York: Verso Books, 1988), 41. [↗](#)
30. Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London: Verso, 2005), 198. One will note that reference to Althusser is by no means arbitrary or extraneous. As Grossberg indicates, “The concept of conjuncture emerged out of debates with and within Marxism and political theory, especially in and around the work of Althusser and the revitalization of Gramscian theory.” Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 40. For a detailed analysis of Althusser’s work from a cultural studies perspective see Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms,” *Media, Culture & Society* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 1980): 57–72. [↗](#)
31. On the concept of “expressive totality,” see Althusser, *For Marx*. [↗](#)
32. Althusser, *For Marx*, 203. To exemplify his contention, Althusser makes reference Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*. Taking the example of Rome, Althusser summarizes Hegel as follows: “Rome: its mighty history, its institutions, its crises and ventures are nothing but the temporal manifestations of the internal principle of the abstract legal personality.” See Althusser, *For Marx*, 102. [↗](#)
33. On the idea of a relational ontology and its presence in the history of philosophy, see Vittorio Morfino, *Plural Temporality: Transindividuality and the Aleatory Between Spinoza and Althusser* (Leiden; Boston: Brill Academic Publishing, 2014), 46–72. [↗](#)
34. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 20. [↗](#)
35. See, e.g., Althusser, Louis. “The Object of Capital.” In Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar *Reading Capital*. (London; New York: Verso, 2009), 104. [↗](#)
36. Althusser, “The Object of Capital,” 108. [↗](#)
37. Althusser, “The Object of Capital,” 104. [↗](#)
38. Althusser, “The Object of Capital,” 105. [↗](#)
39. Althusser, “The Object of Capital,” 105. [↗](#)
40. Althusser, “The Object of Capital,” 105. [↗](#)
41. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 92. [↗](#)
42. Althusser, “The Object of *Capital*,” 111. [↗](#)
43. Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” in *Culture and Materialism* (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 31–50. [↗](#)
44. Harry Harootunian, *Marx After Marx: History and Time in the Expansion of Capitalism* (Columbia University Press, 2015), 2. [↗](#)
45. Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*, 22. [↗](#)
46. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, reprint edition (London; New York, N.Y: Penguin Classics, 1992), 91. [↗](#)
47. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 7. [↗](#)
48. Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx’s Temporalities* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), ix. [↗](#)
49. Tomba, *Marx’s Temporalities*, 180. It is worth noting that Marx’s account of the Russian *obshchina* also suggests that the account of “primitive accumulation” found in *Capital* is not universal. His writings on Russia suggest other paths into, and out of, capitalism. [↗](#)
50. Tomba, *Marx’s Temporalities*, 180. [↗](#)
51. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 41. [↗](#)
52. Althusser, “The Object of *Capital*,” 120. [↗](#)

53. John Clarke, "After Neo-Liberalism? Markets, States, and the Reinvention of Public Welfare," in *Cultural Studies and Finance Capitalism: The Economic Crisis and After*, ed. Mark Hayward (London: Routledge, 2012), 101. [↗](#)
54. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (Penguin Books Limited, 2005). [↗](#)
55. Hall and Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," 57. [↗](#)
56. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (International Publishers Co, 1971), 178. [↗](#)
57. Hall and Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," 58. [↗](#)
58. Hall and Massey, "Interpreting the Crisis," 57. [↗](#)
59. Harootunian, *Marx After Marx*. 16. [↗](#)
60. Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, 40. [↗](#)

[Bio](#)



#### Douglas Spielman

Douglas Spielman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill. His past work has looked at representations of time in Marx's theory of value. Douglas's current research analyzes the ways in which labor was mobilized as a category of political recognition and right in early modern and modern social thought. He is, in part, concerned with how these usages of the category were impacted by technoscientific developments and discourses.



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